

Trinidad and Tobago

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

An estimated 3.5 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were counted as working in Trinidad and Tobago in 2000. Approximately 4.5 percent of all boys 5 to 14 were working compared to 2.6 percent of girls in the same age group.⁴⁶⁶⁰ The ILO indicated that in 2001 an estimated 1.2 percent of children aged 5 to 14 were engaged in paid work.⁴⁶⁶¹ Children are engaged in agriculture, scavenging, loading and stocking goods, gardening, car repair, car washing, construction, fishing, and begging.⁴⁶⁶² Children also work as handymen, shop assistants, cosmetologists' assistants, domestic servants,⁴⁶⁶³ and street vendors.⁴⁶⁶⁴ These activities are usually reported as being part of family activities.⁴⁶⁶⁵

Primary education is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 12 years. However, in practice, children tend to attend school between the ages of 6 and 15 years. Enrollment rates for female and male students are relatively equal.⁴⁶⁶⁶ In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 100 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 91 percent.⁴⁶⁶⁷ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. In 2000, 97 percent of children 5 to 14 years were attending school.⁴⁶⁶⁸ The rate of repetition in primary school was 8 percent of total enrollment in the same year.⁴⁶⁶⁹ As of 2000, 71 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade five.⁴⁶⁷⁰ The public school system does not adequately meet the needs of the school age population due to overcrowding, substandard physical facilities, and occasional violence in the classroom.⁴⁶⁷¹

⁴⁶⁶⁰ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, October 7, 2005. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the section of the report titled "Data Sources and Definitions."

⁴⁶⁶¹ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, August 26, 2005.

⁴⁶⁶² U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, August 4, 2004.

⁴⁶⁶³ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, October 2, 2002.

⁴⁶⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Trinidad and Tobago*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27921.htm>.

⁴⁶⁶⁵ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, August 4, 2004.

⁴⁶⁶⁶ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, September 1, 2001. See also Leith L. Dunn, *The Situation of Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labor in a tourist economy: a Rapid Assessment*, ILO-IPEC, November 2002, 18.

⁴⁶⁶⁷ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrollment Ratios, Primary; accessed December 2005).

⁴⁶⁶⁸ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*.
⁴⁶⁶⁹ The repetition rate for males was slightly higher. See World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004.

⁴⁶⁷⁰ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=55> (School life expectancy, % of repeaters, survival rates; accessed December 2005).

⁴⁶⁷¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Trinidad and Tobago*, Section 5.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Children’s Act establishes the minimum age for employment in family business at 12 years, and prohibits children under 14 years from work in factories, in public industries, or on ships.⁴⁶⁷² According to the Children’s Act, children under the age of 18 may work only during daylight hours. Exceptions are made for children involved in family business and children ages 16 to 18 working at night in sugar factories.⁴⁶⁷³

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Trinidad and Tobago. There are no laws prohibiting trafficking,⁴⁶⁷⁴ but the Criminal Code prohibits procuring a minor under the age of 16 years for the purpose of prostitution.⁴⁶⁷⁵ The punishment for procurement is 15 years of imprisonment.⁴⁶⁷⁶ Trafficking may also be prosecuted under laws that address kidnapping, labor conditions, procurement of sex, prostitution, slavery, and indentured servitude.⁴⁶⁷⁷ The use of children under the age of 16 in pornography is also prohibited.⁴⁶⁷⁸ There is no compulsory military service in Trinidad & Tobago; the minimum age for voluntary military service is 16.⁴⁶⁷⁹

The Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro-Enterprise Development and the Ministry of Social Development are currently responsible for enforcing child labor provisions. According to the U.S. Department of State, enforcement is weak because there is no comprehensive government policy on child labor and there are no established mechanisms for receiving, investigating, and addressing child labor complaints.⁴⁶⁸⁰

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor recently launched a project to withdraw and rehabilitate child laborers in two landfill sites in Trinidad and Tobago.⁴⁶⁸¹ An Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee for Children in Need of Special Protection, under the Ministry of Social Development, is creating a system to monitor children in need of assistance, including those at risk of exploitative child labor; analyzing

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	9/3/2004	✓
Ratified Convention 182	4/23/2003	✓
ILO-IPEC Associated Member		✓
National Plan for Children		✓
National Child Labor Action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

⁴⁶⁷² Dunn, *The Situation of Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labor*, 17, 18. See also U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, August 4, 2004.

⁴⁶⁷³ Dunn, *The Situation of Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labor*, 18. See also U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, September 1, 2001.

⁴⁶⁷⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Trinidad and Tobago*, Section 6f.

⁴⁶⁷⁵ Article 17 of the Criminal Code, as cited in The Protection Project, "Trinidad and Tobago," in *Human Rights Report on Trafficking of Persons, Especially Women and Children: A Country-by-Country Report on a Contemporary Form of Slavery*, March 2002; available from <http://209.190.246.239/ver2/cr/tt.pdf>.

⁴⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Trinidad and Tobago*, Section 6f.

⁴⁶⁷⁸ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, September 1, 2001.

⁴⁶⁷⁹ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, 2004 2004; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=838.

⁴⁶⁸⁰ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, email communication to USDOL official, May 24, 2005.

⁴⁶⁸¹ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*. Also ILO, *The Situation of Children in Landfill Sites and other Worst Forms of Child Labor: A Rapid Assessment*, December 2002.

data; developing policy; and promoting cooperation between government ministries, NGOs, and the private sector.⁴⁶⁸² The National Plan for Children has been under review by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2005, following inquiries regarding delays and necessary improvements on the implementation of the Plan.⁴⁶⁸³ The UN Committee Expert serving as country Rapporteur has noted the creation of an inter-ministerial committee to ensure the implementation of the Plan in 2005. ILO-IPEC works with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to implement a regional project to combat the worst forms of children labor.⁴⁶⁸⁴

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is piloting a School Support Services Program to offer counseling, homework assistance, and other support to high risk children. The MOE has also implemented a book loan/grant system for primary and secondary students.⁴⁶⁸⁵

Existing government child and youth programs also include the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Program, and Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centers. Government programs focus mainly on providing at-risk youth with short-term care, remedial education, and vocational training.⁴⁶⁸⁶

⁴⁶⁸² U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, August 4, 2004.

⁴⁶⁸³ U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child, "Committee on Rights of Child Considers Report of Trinidad and Tobago," *Press Release*, January 16, 2006; available from <http://www.hrea.org/lists/child-rights/markup/msg00385.html>.

⁴⁶⁸⁴ The projects were funded by the Canadian government in 2002 and 2003. See ILO-IPEC - Geneva official, email communication to USDOL official, May 12, 2004.

⁴⁶⁸⁵ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, *reporting*, August 4, 2004.

⁴⁶⁸⁶ U.S. Embassy- Port of Spain, email communication.